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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: COM EMPHASIZES AHTISAARI LEGISLATION, SERB  
ISSUES TO PM THACI AND DEPUTY PM'S AS PRIORITIES FOR NEW  
GOVERNMENT

Classified By: COM TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: At a January 14 meeting, COM encouraged PM Thaci to reach out quickly to new opposition party leaders Bexhet Pacolli and Nexhat Daci and make certain their representatives were included in the preparation of Ahtisaari settlement legislation and of Kosovo's new Constitution, in the interest of quick and non-controversial passage of Ahtisaari-related items through Kosovo's Assembly. COM urged that Thaci come out publicly and soon to reaffirm his government's support for the Ahtisaari plan's provision regarding border demarcation with Macedonia, noting this would greatly help relations with Macedonia, a key partner for Kosovo in the coming years. Thaci said he would build good relations with opposition parties and include them in the Ahtisaari legislation and Constitution processes. Regarding Macedonia, Thaci did not demur and said he would find the "appropriate time," very shortly, to reiterate his commitment to Ahtisaari's position on the border issue. At a subsequent meeting with Thaci's two deputy prime ministers, COM reiterated the joint ICOPT/USOP offer to brief all new ministers on the process to finalize Ahtisaari legislation (a cabinet meeting with ICO and USOP participation has now been set for January 17). COM also urged both to pay particular attention to Kosovo Serb property issues as part of a larger package of measures designed to support the Serb community. Both Deputy PMs expressed their deep appreciation for U.S. support and said they would these issues a priority. COM is continuing to emphasize these themes in her introductory meetings with the full slate of new ministers, as well as with opposition party leaders. END SUMMARY.

Include the Opposition in Ahtisaari Prep

12. (C) COM encouraged newly installed PM Hashim Thaci, at a January 14 meeting, to include the new opposition parties emerging from the November 2007 elections in the preparation of Ahtisaari legislation and of Kosovo's new Constitution, to help speed the approval and ultimate Assembly passage of all Ahtisaari-related items. She noted that she and International Civilian Office Planning Team (ICOPT) head Jonsson would soon meet with AKR chairman Bexhet Pacolli and

LDD chairman Nexhat Daci to support their participation, but very much wanted the PM to take the first step. Thaci said he already had these leaders, personal commitments to be part of the working groups on Ahtisaari legislation and the Constitution, but would meet with them in the very near future to confirm this. He promised to let COM know the results of these meetings.

#### Relations with Macedonia, Outreach to Serbs

13. (C) Indicating that Macedonia's recognition of Kosovo independence and its support for Kosovo during a difficult period of relations with Serbia was critically important, COM asked Thaci to publicly support the border demarcation provisions with Macedonia that are part of the Ahtisaari package. Thaci noted that he had been congratulated by Macedonian PM Gruevski on his election victory, and said that he would find the "appropriate moment" very soon to express his and his government's commitment to full implementation of Ahtisaari provisions with regard to the border.

14. (C) Thaci also indicated that he would like to use the USOP-sponsored media center in the Kosovo Serb enclave of Caglavica, just outside of Pristina, to reassure Kosovo Serbs and encourage them to stay in Kosovo. The PM noted he would try as well to program a series of visits to Serb communities to pass similar messages in person. COM strongly encouraged Thaci in this.

Message to Deputy PMs: Ahtisaari legislation and Serb issues are priorities

15. (C) COM told Deputy Prime Ministers Kuci (PDK) and Manaj

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(LDK) that they had the double challenge of implementing Ahtissari and honoring the political commitments they made during the recent elections, but that the first must take priority over the second in the interest of Kosovo's future and the resolution of status. She encouraged a rational and collaborative approach to their work, suggesting that they organize the supervision of Kosovo's ministries between them not on a party basis, but on a basis that made logical and policy sense and would give the public a sense of confidence in the government coalition.

16. (C) COM reiterated that the top priorities of the new government were to prepare Ahtisaari legislation and the new Constitution, and to resolve issues important to the Kosovo Serb community, particularly property claims. COM urged again the scheduling of a cabinet session in which the ICO and USOP could jointly brief ministers on their obligations under Ahtisaari. (Note: This session, which will be attended by President Sejdiu and Assembly Speaker Krasniqu, is set for January 17. End Note.) Turning to Manaj, whose hometown of Klina has been the source of troubling obstacles to the return of Kosovo Serb property, COM said we would look to him to take the lead in resolving these problems. Both officials said they were deeply appreciative of U.S. commitment to Kosovo's independence, were aware of their weighty responsibilities, and promised their full commitment to these key priorities.

17. (C) Comment: COM is following up on these messages with the full slate of new ministers, particularly those responsible directly for drafting and implementation of Ahtisaari legislation (Ministers of Local Self-Government, Interior, Justice, Environment and Spatial Planning, among others). She has also taken the message on the need for unambiguous support of Ahtisaari to opposition leaders, meeting with AAK officials and scheduling USOP discussions with new parliamentarians from governing and opposition parties. We will keep up these consultations continuously, as well as provide direct support for the constitution drafting process and the ICO-led Ahtisaari legislation process. Thus far, the responses from Kosovars across the

political spectrum have all been positive and reassuring, but action is needed to prove their commitment in a concrete way.

End Comment.

KAIDANOW